

VZCZCXRO7164
OO RUEHDE RUEHDH RUEHDIR
DE RUEHRH #1570 3281402
ZNY SSSSS ZZH
O 241402Z NOV 09
FM AMEMBASSY RIYADH
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1990
INFO RUEHZM/GULF COOPERATION COUNCIL COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE
RUEHEG/AMEMBASSY CAIRO IMMEDIATE 2774
RUEHDM/AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS IMMEDIATE 5345
RUEHDH/AMCONSUL DHAHRAN IMMEDIATE 0354
RUEHJI/AMCONSUL JEDDAH IMMEDIATE 0462
RUMICEA/USCINCCENT INTEL CEN MACDILL AFB FL IMMEDIATE
RUEKDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC IMMEDIATE
RHMFISS/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T RIYADH 001570

NOFORN
SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/24/2019
TAGS: [MOPS](#) [PREL](#) [SA](#) [YM](#)
SUBJECT: SAG LIKELY TO SEEK CEASE-FIRE ONLY WHEN HOUTHIS
REPELLED

REF: A. SANAA 2117
[1](#)B. RIYADH 1558

Classified By: AMBASSADOR JAMES B. SMITH, REASONS 1.4 (A), (B) & (D)

[1](#)1. (S/NF) Ref A reports possible cease-fire discussions between Yemeni government (ROYG) and Houthi representatives. Embassy Riyadh is not aware of parallel cease-fire discussions between the Saudi government and Houthi representatives, though we do not dismiss the possibility. Continuing Saudi mobilization suggests that the military leadership is not yet prepared for a cease fire. However, this would not preclude Saudi contacts with Houthi representatives to open a channel for communications when the time is right. It is also possible that there will be discussions on the margins of the Hajj. It is clear that SAG and ROYG officials continue to coordinate closely. FM Saud and Assistant Minister of Interior Prince Mohammed bin Nayif traveled secretly to Sanaa at least once in the last week and various Yemeni officials, including Deputy Prime Minister Alimi, have come to Riyadh for meetings with King Abdullah and other officials.

[1](#)2. (S) Mission assesses that the fighting will continue until the Saudi military objectives are met. Their stated objectives include expelling all Houthis from Saudi territory, creating a buffer zone on the Saudi side of the border, and pushing the Houthis back at least ten kilometers inside Yemeni territory to deter future attacks. A possible secondary objective could be to maintain a second front open against the Houthis to relieve pressure on the Yemeni Army long enough for ROYG to reconstitute their force to some degree, though the Saudis themselves have not told us this.

[1](#)3. (S) The SAG obviously would prefer to achieve these objectives as quickly as possible, to avoid stirring up sympathetic support for the Houthi (Shi'a) effort among their own population. As per ref b, the SAG's public rhetoric has shifted to portraying the fighting as largely over to mollify Muslim sensibilities about fighting during the Hajj period, and we anticipate that the SAG will continue to downplay action on the border, even as the fighting continues.
SMITH